

## Approaching Dream Work

Since this book is intended to give a direct, practical approach to dream work, we will not spend much time talking about the history of dream analysis. However, there are some concepts and terms in dream analysis that are very useful for orienting oneself to dreams. Since they will come up from time to time, we will have the opportunity to discuss them now. Then we will move on to practical steps in order to learn how to use them.

A good starting point is to look at an actual dream. We will use a dream that can then be used to illustrate some of the basic concepts of dream analysis. The dream of a young professional woman who learned to drive. The dream is short and simple, on the surface, but it has a powerful impact on the dreamer.

### *The Renegade Dream*

I am looking for my car keys. I realize my brother has borrowed them. Then I remember that my brother has borrowed them and not returned them. I see both of them and I call to them. They seem to hear me. Then a disheveled young man, who looks like a "renegade," gets into my car and drives off. I feel extremely helpless, and somewhat abandoned.

For her work on this dream, the dreamer began to explore the basic principles: First, the basic function of dreams is to bring the unconscious into the conscious. She realized, therefore, that the dream was something that existed within her at the unconscious level. Second, she knew that the images in the dream were not to be taken literally but as symbols of parts of herself and of her inner life. She did both dream work and Active Imagination with the characters in her dream. This was the basic approach that resulted:

Because of the spontaneous associations she had with her husband and brother, she felt that the dream was a part of herself that needed to be quiet, meditative, and withdrawn within herself. She saw that she was so busy with her

professional life that she had no time for home, family, and the quiet time that kept her centered. She had been taking on more than she could handle, teaching classes as well as carrying a big work load. She was overworked, edgy, unable to find time to be alone or to be with her husband. She said yes to every request, agreed to join in every project.

The car represented to her this overinvolvement. That pattern felt like a "vehicle" that she entered and that ran away with her. Like the car, the pattern was mechanical, a product of collective society, and somehow out of her control. She felt as though something had pushed her into the car, turned the switch, and "drove away" with her into another project, another involvement.

She associated the other masculine figure, the "renegade" who drove the car away, with the part of herself that always wanted to be in high gear, that was saying yes to everything, that loved to turn on the ignition and charge off in the collective circles. He was like a wild person who couldn't stand to sit still or be quiet. The dreamer felt split between the side of life represented by her husband and brother and the side represented by the renegade.

In response to this dream, she made some drastic changes in her schedule. She cut down her involvements in the world outside, gave herself more time to be with her family, be quiet, and do inner work. There was an immediate sense of relief as her energy was focused on the aspects of life that were most important to her.

This dream illustrates several basic principles that will help us. First, an important point: Even a short, seemingly insignificant dream tries to tell us something that we need to know. Dreams never waste our time. If we take the trouble to listen to the "little" dreams, we find that they carry important messages.

Who are these characters who populate our dreams? What is it in our inner structure that is represented by figures like the husband, the brother, the renegade? For this woman, we have seen that the husband's image represented something distinct from her literal, physical husband—something within her own inner being. In this dream, his image represented a *life-principle* at work within her, a set of values, an inner sense of what way of life was most true to her essential character.

The multiplicity of dream figures reflects the plurality and multidimensional structure of the inner self. We are all made up of many personalities or inner "persons," coexisting within one mind and one body. We think of ourselves as one individual, with one single viewpoint on life, but actually, if we pay attention, we have to admit that it feels as though there were several people living somewhere deep inside, each pulling in a different direction.

Dreams show us, in symbolic form, all the different personalities that interact within us and make up our total self. In the Renegade Dream, the dreamer found several aspects of herself represented by the images of husband, brother, and renegade. One part of her wants to stay at home, tend the garden, meditate, and enjoy her family. One part wants to do good work in her profession. Another part of her wants to go out and save the world, charge off with the "renegade" into endless crusades and "good works." The "renegade" part of her, in fact, seems to be a slightly disheveled manifestation of the archetypal *hero* living within her. By showing her all this, the dream makes it clear she must find a balance among all these opposing urges and values.

Jung observed that each of our psychological components is a distinct center of consciousness. We can think of them as structures within ourselves that make up our total psyche. We can see them as independent energy systems that combine in us, for they are *autonomous*: Each has its own consciousness, its own values, desires, and points of view. Each leads us in a different direction; each has a different strength or quality to contribute to our lives; and each has its own role in our total character.

This is why they often feel as though they were independent people living on the inside. It is appropriate that they are symbolized as *persons* in our dreams.

Often when we think that we are trying to make a decision based on facts or logic, we are actually caught in a battle between terrible forces inside us. Since it is mostly unconscious, and we don't know who fights for what, we can't make peace. We don't know which side to take. We feel ourselves hopelessly split between opposing forces.

Here is a woman in a novel by a contemporary writer, divided within as she faces her seducer:

"Then we can travel together," he explained, as if this were the solution both of them had been working towards.

She said nothing at all. Inside her it was as if each component of her nature had gone to war against the other: the child fought the mother, the tart fought the nun . . .  
(LeCarre, *Little Drummer Girl*, p. 78)

Who is this child who fights the mother, this tart who fights the nun? What of the man whose inner hero wants to storm castles and quest for the Holy Grail while his inner monk wants to stay quiet in his cell and contemplate the divine mystery? We might say that these represent human possibilities, aspects of human character that are common to us all.

Here we encounter the *archetypes*: the universal patterns or tendencies in the human unconscious that find their way into our individual psyches and form us. They are actually the psychological building blocks of energy that combine together to create the individual psyche. Here are the type of the child, the type of the mother, the universal virgin, and the universal tart, all flowing through the personality of one individual.

In our dreams, they join the archetypal hero or heroine, the priest, the scoundrel. Each of them adds a different richness to our character and has a different truth to tell. Each represents our own, individual version of the universal forces that combine to create a human life.

The inner self is not only plural: Jung found that the psyche manifests itself as an *androgyny*, containing both feminine and masculine energies. Every man needs to connect the "masculine" ego to the side of his psyche that the unconscious sees as his "feminine" side. Each woman's feminine ego needs to make a synthesis with the symbolically "masculine" side of her total self.

The psyche spontaneously divides itself into pairs of opposites. All the archetypal energies in us appear to the conscious mind as complementary pairs: *yin* and *yang*, feminine and masculine, dark and light, positive and negative. Part of me lives in the conscious mind, and part of me—the complementary quality that completes the whole—is hidden in the unconscious. The unconscious constantly uses the masculine-feminine dichotomy to symbolize the interplay of the inner forces that must balance and complete one another. They may appear as hostile opposites, deadly en-

emies, yet they are destined to make a synthesis, for they are two facets of one stream of energy.

Figures of the opposite sex often appear in dreams to symbolize the energy systems that are the farthest from the ego, farthest from the conscious mind, deep in the unconscious of the dreamer. It is impossible to predict for a particular woman or man what inner parts will be represented by an image of the opposite sex. It depends on the individual, but some common patterns are clear and useful to know.

Men have been traditionally conditioned in our culture to identify with the thinking and organizing side of life, to be heroes and doers. The unconscious often chooses a feminine figure, therefore, to represent a man's emotional nature, his capacity for feeling, appreciating beauty, developing values, and relating through love. These are the capacities that in many men live mostly in the unconscious. Their appearance in a man's dream in feminine imagery signals his need to make them conscious, expand the narrow focus of his "masculine" ego-life.

The ego structure of many women is identified mostly with feeling, relatedness, nurturing, and mothering—qualities that are traditionally thought of as "feminine." The feminine side of the psyche is also rational, but it uses feeling-logic, the rational processes that are based on feeling, on sensing fine differentiations of values. It "knows" by a different mode than does the masculine side—by sensing the *whole* rather than by analyzing. Women's dreams therefore often use masculine figures to represent the other side of the psyche—thinking-logic, knowing by analyzing and differentiating, classifying, organizing, competing, wielding power. A woman may find that many of her attitude principles, such as her ideas about religion, philosophy, and politics, will be generated from the side of her psyche that is represented by masculine figures.

The most important aspect of the androgynous psyche is the soul-image. In every man and woman there is an inner being whose primary function in the psyche is to serve as the *psychopomp*—the one who guides the ego to the inner world, who serves as mediator between the unconscious and the ego.

Jung became aware of the soul-image when he sensed a feminine presence within himself who pulled him toward the uncon-

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see intro

scious, who embodied the part of himself that lived in the realm of dream and imagination. When she appeared in his dreams, he found she was a creature of mythical quality, seemingly magical and half-divine. Like Beatrice, in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, she led him to the inner world of the unconscious and served as his guide there. He found the same archetypal feminine presence in other men. He also observed a corresponding masculine soul-image in the dreams and lives of women.

Jung felt that this inner person corresponds to the traditional religious conception of the soul as an inner part of ourselves that connects us to the spiritual realm and leads us to God, so he referred to the feminine soul-image in men as *anima* and to the masculine soul-image in women as *animus*. *Anima* and *animus* are Latin words for *soul*.

It is important to be aware of the soul-images. They appear regularly in our dreams and play a tremendous role in our development as individuals. They affect the entire course of our lives.

Both as energies within us and as powerful symbols, the soul-images are tremendous forces to be reckoned with. All our in-born desire for unity and meaning, our desire to bring the opposing parts of ourselves together, to go to the unconscious and explore the inner world, to find religious experience, is concentrated in these inner beings who are the mediators between our egos and the vast unconscious. If we don't interact with the *anima* or *animus* in our inner work, we inevitably project them into areas of our lives where they don't belong.

For example, a man may project his *anima* into his job and become obsessive with it, making his work into an inferior channel for his religious life. A woman may project her *animus* onto an external man and fall in love not so much with the human being but with the soul-image that she has projected onto him. The whole basis of the romantic fantasy that so often sabotages ordinary human love is the projection of a man's *anima* onto a woman or a woman's *animus* onto an external man. In this way people try to complete themselves through another human being, try to live out the unconscious, unrealized parts of themselves through the external person on whom they put the romantic projection.

In the introduction I spoke of the process of individuation. As you know, individuation is a movement toward consciousness of

the total inner self. Using our dreams as models, we can see that individuation also consists to a great extent in bringing the different inner persons within us together in a synthesis. Individuation is not only becoming conscious of these inner energy systems, it is also bringing relatedness and unity among them.

The end product of this evolution is something we can sense, feel, and describe intuitively even though we have not yet attained it—the sense of wholeness, of being completed. The wholeness of our total being, and our consciousness of the quality of wholeness, is expressed in an archetype. Jung called this archetype the *self*.

The self is the principle of integration. It is also the whole—the entire person. When a symbol of the self appears in a dream, it represents not only the totality of our being, but also our potential capacity for the highest consciousness—the awareness of unity in ourselves and in the cosmos.

Dreams constantly record the process of individuation and the movement of the ego toward the self. In most dreams we see an immediate, local situation in our lives. But, at the same time, if you collect your dreams together and see them in the aggregate, they report the stages along the way in the journey toward the self.

The self has characteristic symbols: The circle, the mandala (a circle divided into four parts), the square, and the diamond are all abstract figures that express the archetypal self.

The self is present in all quaternity dreams—dreams involving four characters or in some way emphasizing the number four. Jung found that numbers are archetypal symbols. The number four has been used in every religion from ancient times to the present to symbolize the wholeness of the cosmos or the completion of a spiritual evolution.

Another characteristic symbol of the self is the divine or royal couple: The conjunction of the polarities of masculine and feminine, like the conjunction of the dragons Yin and Yang, symbolizes the highest synthesis of the self.

There is yet one other basic energy system in the unconscious that appears regularly in our dreams and is useful to know about. Jung called this inner being the *shadow*. In every person there is a part of the unconscious that is very close to the ego and usually appears as the same gender as the dreamer. The shadow is a kind

of alter ego, split off from the conscious ego-mind and sentenced to live in the unconscious. Usually the shadow contains qualities and traits, both negative and positive, that are a natural part of the ego-personality. But the ego, for one reason or another, has either failed to assimilate these qualities or has repressed them outright. Sometimes the qualities in the shadow seem embarrassing or primitive to the ego: One doesn't want to admit that they belong to one. Sometimes the shadow has tremendous positive strengths that the ego won't claim because it would mean either too much responsibility or a shattering alteration of one's puny self-image.

How the shadow appears in a dream depends on the ego's attitude. For example, if a man's attitude is friendly toward his inner shadow, and he is willing to grow and change, the shadow will often appear as a helpful friend, a "buddy," a tribal brother who helps him in his adventures, backs him up, and teaches him skills. If he is trying to repress his shadow, it will usually appear as a hateful enemy, a brute or monster who attacks him in his dreams. The same principles apply to a woman. Depending on her relationship to her shadow, she may appear as a loving sister or as a frightful witch.

These are some of the basic concepts and models in Jungian dream work that most people find useful when first approaching dreams. They will become more clear as we work with sample dreams and learn the practical steps in the chapters ahead.

Shadow: self-revealed

Shadow (ed) revealed

## The Four-Step Approach

Before we begin step one it may help to have a brief preview of the four basic steps we will be covering in the pages ahead. The steps are these:

1. Making associations
2. Connecting dream images to inner dynamics
3. Interpreting
4. Doing rituals to make the dream concrete

In the first step we form the foundation for interpreting the dream by finding the associations that spring out of our unconscious in response to the dream images. Every dream is made up of a series of images, so our work begins with discovering the meanings that those images have.

In the second step, we look for and find the parts of our inner selves that the dream images represent. We find the dynamics at work inside us that are symbolized by the dream situation. Then, in the third step, the interpretation, we put together the information we have gleaned in the first two steps and arrive at a view of the dream's meaning when taken as a whole.

At the fourth step we learn to do rituals that will make the dream more conscious, imprint its meaning more clearly on our minds, and give it the concreteness of immediate physical experience. When we arrive at the fourth step, we will discuss the uses that ceremony and ritual can have for us in reconnecting with the unconscious.

With this brief road map before us, we will start now with the first step.

## Step One: Associations

For every symbol in a dream the unconscious is ready to provide the associations that explain the symbol's meaning. The unconscious contains within itself the references for every symbol that it generates; therefore, the symbolic language of the unconscious can be decoded. Our task begins with waking up to the associations that spontaneously flow out of us in response to symbols.

First, go through your dream and write out every association that you have with each dream image. A dream may contain persons, objects, situations, colors, sounds, or speech. Each of these, for our purposes, is a distinct *image* and needs to be looked at in its own right.

The basic technique is this: Write down the first image that appears in the dream. Then ask yourself, "What feeling do I have about this image? What words or ideas come to mind when I look at it?" Your *association* is any word, idea, mental picture, feeling, or memory that pops into your mind when you look at the image in the dream. It is literally *anything* that you spontaneously connect with the image.

Usually every image will inspire several associations. Each brings to mind a certain person, word, phrase, or memory. Write down each association that comes directly from the image. Then go back to the image and see what other associations come to mind. Keep returning to the dream image and writing down each association that is produced in your mind. Only after you have written all the associations that you find in that one image should you go on to the next image and begin the same process.

At first, this may feel like a lot of work. But after you do it a few times and discover the amazing power of this technique to key you into the meaning of your dream symbols, you will feel that it is well worth the effort. You will also begin to see why symbols have such power over human beings: Symbols connect us spontaneously to the deep parts of ourselves that we have longed to touch.

At this point you should not try to decide which association is

the so-called right one. Often the first connection that comes up, the one that seems so obvious, is not the one that will work best for you later on in the process. The unconscious doesn't follow the pathways of ego-logic. An association that feels silly, off-the-wall, irrational, may turn out to be the one that makes the most sense after you work awhile. Sometimes *all* the associations turn out to be relevant to your dream, although they seem contradictory at first. So don't try to choose among them at this point. Just write them down.

Suppose you have a dream that begins: "I am in a blue room," *what do you*  
The first image you have to work with is the color blue. These *associations*  
might be the associations you would produce:

Blue: Sad or depressed—"blue mood," "I've got the blues."

Blue moon.

Color of clarity: cool, detached consciousness contrasted with lively, emotional red.

My blue sweater. I usually wear blue.

My grandmother's living room. Always blue.

Blew—"blown away."

"True blue"—means honest and faithful.

It is no accident that the unconscious produces the color blue in one scene, but uses red in another or black in yet another. Blue is used because this particular color expresses the dynamic at work in the unconscious. The meaning that blue has for the unconscious will be found somewhere in the associations to this color that the unconscious produces.

Depending on who the dreamer is, the color could represent clarity and detached contemplation. This use of the symbol might, when interpreted in step three, turn out to mean that a person who is completely controlled by feelings needs to be a little more cool and clear. For another person, the color blue could turn out to be a comment that things are *too* cool, too abstract, without enough redblooded human energy or Dionysian feeling.

For one person, the blue room could represent a depressed feeling: the dream here would refer to the colloquial expression "I feel blue" or "I've got the blues." Your own association could

be to your general reaction to that color: "I feel quiet and peaceful when there are blue things around me."

It does not matter how farfetched the association seems to you. This is the stage of dream work in which you simply gather information from the unconscious. You are, in effect, asking the unconscious, "What are the meanings that *you* associate with *your own symbol*?"

Many different reactions will come out of each person. The purpose is to find out what your own unique associations are, not what someone else tells you they *ought* to be according to some book or some theory of psychology. So don't be embarrassed by your associations; don't censor them; don't try to make them sound more elegant or "proper." Just take them as they come.

### MAKING DIRECT ASSOCIATIONS

Each time you make a connection, be sure to return to the original dream image. Make a new association from the original image. Always go back to the dream image and start over again from there. Don't make chain associations.

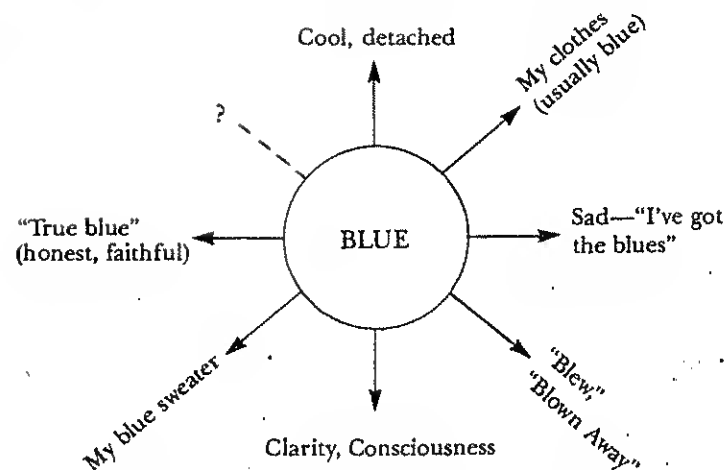
Chain associations are when we make connections with the *associations* rather than with the original dream image. (This is also called "free association.") You make your first association, then you make another association to that one, and then another association to that one, until you have a whole chain. If we do this we never get back to the original dream image.

An example of chain associating would be this:

BLUE → Sad → Hospital → Aunt Jennie → Apple pie → Warm kitchen

You can see that this chain leads farther and farther away from the original image, the color blue. By the time we get to "hospital" or "Aunt Jennie" we have already lost any direct connection to the color blue.

The correct method can be pictured as a wheel, with the dream image at the hub, and the associations radiating out like spokes from the center. All associations proceed from the original image. We always return to the center of the wheel before we go to the next association. One woman I know does all her dream analysis this way, diagraming each image as the center of a wheel:



### BEING SENSITIVE TO COLLOQUIALISMS

Many of the associations that come up spontaneously are colloquialisms. The unconscious often uses symbols that bring up colloquial phrases like "I've got the blues." This is because our colloquial expressions come out of olden times, when our language was richer in concrete imagery and closer to the archetypes. They come out of the simple, down-to-earth everyday life; therefore, they are excellent language for the unconscious.

A common example is the dream motif of flying. If you find yourself flying in a dream, it can bring to mind a wealth of colloquial expressions: "I'm flying high." "My head's in the clouds." "I should be more down-to-earth."

These colorful phrases all express a condition that we call *inflation*. The ego gets inflated when we are caught up in a power system, when we are lost in an ideal or abstraction at the expense of ordinary humanness, when the ego has been puffed up by identifying with an archetype and has lost all sense of its limits. Then we start "flying high," and the cure is to "get our feet back on the ground."

Similarly, when a dream says that someone is "blowing smoke" or is "full of hot air," we immediately have a sense of what the dream is trying to say. If there is a jewel in your dream, you may ask in what respect the dream is saying that you "are a jewel." On

the other hand, if a dream says, "He is a jackass," we may also ponder how *that* applies to us!

## USING THE "IT CLICKS" METHOD

This leads us to the question of how we are to choose one of these associations. Which one is going to lead me to a correct interpretation?

Jung had an answer that sounds deceptively simple: He said that one of the associations will "click"! As you go through your associations, one of them will generate a lot of energy in you. You will see how it fits together with other symbols in the dream. Or you may feel a spot touched in you where you are wounded and confused. You may find that this association makes you see something in yourself that you had never looked at before. In that moment, you will get a rush of conviction from somewhere deep inside: *It fits. It clicks.*

Although this method sounds too simple, it is reliable. Remember that dreams are created out of energy. One way to find the essence of a dream symbol is to *go where the energy is*—go to the association that brings up a surge of energy. Every symbol is calculated to rouse us, to wake us up. It is organically tied to energy systems deep in the substrata of the unconscious. When you make a connection that is very close to the energy source, sparks fly. It is as though you had touched a live wire. You feel intuitively that you have tapped into the energy behind your dream: The association *clicks*.

Sometimes it is not clear at first which association is most accurate or more useful for understanding your dream. In that case it is better to leave it alone for a while and go on to the next symbol. Don't lock yourself into one meaning for the symbol; keep an open mind until you begin to tie the whole dream together. Let your understanding of the symbols grow naturally in you, without forcing, without jumping to conclusions.

## DREAM WORK ILLUSTRATION: THE MONASTERY

As an example of making associations we have the following dream and some of the actual associations that the dreamer made

in her notebook when she was working on it. Because we have limited time and space, I will transcribe only a few of the images from her dream with some of their associations.

The woman who had this dream comes from an Italian Catholic family. As she grew into adulthood she found herself rebelling against her Latin background and her childhood religion. She became involved in Zen Buddhist philosophy and meditation. This dream signaled a return to her cultural and religious roots, yet a graduation out of her childhood version of them. It showed her that she could make a synthesis of East and West within her own self that was true to her own character.

### *Dream*

I am in a monastic cloister, in a room or cell attached to the chapel. I am separated from the people and the rest of the chapel by a grille. Mass begins. I participate alone in my cell. I sit with crossed legs, *zazen* style, but holding my rosary. I hear the murmurs of the responses through the grille. The voices are tranquil. I close my eyes and I too receive communion, although no one and nothing physical enters my cell. The mass finishes. I become aware of flowers blooming at the side of my chamber. I feel a deep serenity.

### *Step One: My Associations*

Monastery	Religious life; formal religious life; community, my childhood religion; contemplation; sacrifice, medieval cloisters in Italy and Spain; separation from the world; Zen monastery I almost joined.
Room/cell	Container; womb; the basic component of life-forms; protection; separation from the collective; individuation; the path that must be traveled alone, outside of any collective identity or comfort.
Mass	<i>En masse</i> = collective form of religious experience; group worship through intermediary priest; religious form of my particular collective; form I left to individuate. One step removed = need to participate in religious experience yet not be identified with collective, outer form of the inner experience.

- Communion Last Supper, Christ's sacrifice, sacrament, that communion song I've always hated; fainting during three-hour fast; mystical union; to become one with = com-union; transubstantiation = transformation; comes in *nonphysical* form = must be experienced on the inner plane, inwardly rather than collectively.
- Zazen Practicing stillness; the familiarity I felt with the practice from the very first, like going home; practice without dogma; experience rather than doctrine; foreign to my upbringing; grief when I saw I couldn't "belong" to Zen collective, either; Zen monastery I had to say no to.
- Grille Separation; partial separation; interaction with the collective world but differentiated interaction; separate identity; separate consciousness.

This gives you a sample of the wealth of material that will flow spontaneously from the unconscious when we really focus on the dream image and look for every association that comes to mind. We have all this material, even though we have not yet gone through all the images.

If you have looked carefully at this woman's associations so far, you may already see the basic relationships that are forming among the images and the various associations that seem to make coherent sense together. You will see how these associations led eventually to her interpretation.

This dream advised the dreamer of the right and the necessity for her to be an individual. The emphasis in the dream was on her living out her religious nature; she had to participate in the mystery, yet not by identifying with a particular external, collective version of religion. In the dream she participated, but remained separate from the group and the group version of religious experience. This was not because she was an elitist, but because that is her nature and her way.

The detail of receiving communion without any physical contact was consistent with her understanding of her dream. She had to experience the immediacy of the Godhead, the transformation, but she had to experience it inwardly and in her individual way, not by identifying with a collective, cultural version of the

experience. In her associations she remembered that she had also considered joining a Buddhist monastery in order to be able to join in the community, belong to something, and follow in a collectively defined way. But she could not do it with Buddhism any more than she could with Catholicism.

The good news in all of this for her was that she could return to her Catholic and Christian heritage but with a new understanding of it that allowed her to participate and to see the essential spirit at the center of the cultural and collective forms. She could be in community, yet not be swallowed by it. She could participate, yet remain an individual going her own unique way.

The flowers that bloom in her cell at the end of the mass she found to be a symbol of new life and new consciousness resulting from the synthesis that she has made in the dream between her childhood religion and her adult experience of the spirit. More accurately speaking, the flowers express the synthesis itself. Such a symbol points to that archetype—the self—that transcends the opposites by revealing the central reality behind them and thereby unites them.

Flowers are not only symbols of the feminine but also of the unified self: in Christianity, the rose that represents Christ; in Eastern religions, the thousand-petaled lotus that portrays the One. By this dreamer's way, which is the path of stillness, she brought the flower of the self into bloom in her life. She found the universal kernel of spirit that is at the center of both her Christian roots and her Zen experience—that transcends both and is not identified with the *outer form* of either.

Some important things happened to this woman as an aftermath to this dream. When we get to the fourth step in dream work, which is to do a ritual to express the meaning of your dream, we will return to this Dream of the Monastery. This dreamer's ritual for her dream, and the events that followed, are very instructive.

## USING ARCHETYPAL AMPLIFICATION

There is another way of finding associations to dream images: *archetypal amplification*. It is basically a process of gathering information about the archetypes that appear in our dreams by going

to sources such as myths, fairy tales, and ancient religious traditions.

I have already given you a simple example in the Dream of the Monastery. I spontaneously associated the flowers that appeared in this woman's room with their role in Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions as symbols of the archetypal self. That, in turn, keyed us into the other information that we already know about the self—that it is the transcendent function that combines the opposites, that draws the fragments of our totality into a unity. And all of this, of course, added greatly to our sense of the meaning and power of the dream.

Jung became aware of the archetypes by observing that the same primordial symbols appear equally in ancient myths and religions and in the dreams of modern people. He was startled to find that images appear in people's dreams that refer to some very ancient symbol, perhaps from a completely different culture, that could not have been known to the conscious mind of the dreamer. From these experiences he began to see that our dreams draw on universal, primordial sources that are deep in the collective unconscious of all humankind. We can often see more clearly how the symbols in our dreams are tied to those universal streams of energy when we encounter the symbols, as Jung did, in myth, religion, and other ancient sources.

It becomes possible to go to a myth where the archetype appears and find the collective associations that the human race as a whole has to that archetype. We can read in the myth all the qualities in us that are contained in the archetype and that are associated with its symbols.

Jung has demonstrated that myths and fairy tales are symbolic manifestations of the unconscious, just as dreams are. In a sense they are the collective dreams of the human race: They reflect the collective unconscious of a tribe, a people, or a culture rather than the local, personal unconscious of one individual. Therefore they are rich sources of information on the archetypes. They go back to the preconscious era, when the human race was closer to its archetypal roots. We may also look to esoteric philosophical traditions, such as medieval alchemy and ancient astrology, as sources of information regarding the archetypes.

The archetype that appears in your dream is a universal quality,

a stream of energy that finds its way into every human being. As the archetype is universal, so is its imagery. Each archetype tends to express itself with its own characteristic symbolism.

The image of the Wise Old Man, for example, is ubiquitous throughout all cultures and races. His image varies from myth to myth, culture to culture. But once you learn to recognize him, you see him in the dreams of a Hindu as well as those of a Westerner.

He may take the form of Saint Peter holding the key to heaven, as he did in one of Jung's dreams. He may appear as a personification of God the Father, as in the vision of Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; in the dream of a Buddhist as a *roshi* (master) or *bodhisattva* (demigod); in a Hindu's dream as a *guru* or a *sunyasin* (ascetic holy man).

There is a common quality that runs through the symbols of the Wise Man—a feeling of wisdom that transcends generations, agelessness in the sense of being outside the flow of time. Here we find him as he appears in a modern myth from the hand of J. R. R. Tolkien:

His hair was dark as the shadows of twilight and upon it was set a circlet of silver; his eyes were grey as a clear evening, and in them was a light like the light of stars. Venerable he seemed as a king crowned with many winters, and yet hale as a tried warrior in the fullness of his strength. . .  
(Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 299)

Archetypal amplification begins with recognizing that an archetypal presence has entered into one's dream. The dream that contains an archetype often has a mythical quality. Instead of scenes that seem like the everyday world, the dream takes you to a place that feels ancient, from another time, or like a fairy tale. You find yourself in a legendary place like Baghdad in the time of genies, magic carpets, and magicians. Another sign is that things are bigger than life or smaller than life. Archetypes may also present themselves as otherworldly animals: talking lions, griffins, dragons, flying horses.

Archetypal figures often have an aura of royalty or divinity. The ancient Greeks personified the archetypes as gods who created the world by shaping the contours of fate or as the heroes and heroines who were caught up in the forces that the gods set in motion.

The Great Mother quality in human nature appears as Aphrodite, goddess of sensual love; Hera, goddess of home and hearth; Demeter, goddess of agriculture. Turning to the Hindu world, we find the Great Mother personified as Kali, the terrible goddess who both blesses and destroys, gives life and takes it back, in the eternal cycle of nature.

These manifestations of the great archetypes show up in the dreams of ordinary mortals. Each of us is a channel through which these archetypal forces must find their way into concrete existence. We *incarnate* the archetypes with our physical lives. Our individual lives are the containers in which they materialize on the face of the earth, the battlegrounds where they fight their eternal, cosmic battles, the stages on which they perform the universal drama that becomes, in one particularized form, every human life.

Once we recognize that a figure is an archetype, the next step is to go to the myths and other sources where the same archetype appears. The figure or events in your dream may spark a memory of a passage in the Bible or a great tale from the days of King Arthur. You go to that source and see what it tells you about this great archetype that has come to you in your dream. What are its characteristics? What is its role in human life? If it is the Great Mother, for example, you go to the myths of the Greek goddesses who personify her, to the manifestations of Kali, to the varied epiphanies of the Holy Virgin.

As you amplify the information on your dream figure, you continue what you have already done with your personal associations: Write down the associations that come to you from the mythical sources. If they elicit energy from inside you, if they make sense, try them out. See what they have to say about who you are and what forces are at work in you.

### USING PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS

This is a good point at which to caution you against using so-called dream-books and dictionaries of symbolism as substitutes for your own personal associations.

Many people unthinkingly turn to a dictionary of symbols each time they try to understand a dream. They look up each symbol

from the dream, write down the standard meanings the dictionary serves up, and then believe that they have "interpreted" their dream. If you use this kind of approach you will never get to the individual, special meaning that your dream has for you.

These approaches are based on an erroneous assumption: that every symbol has one, standard, collective meaning that is true for every dream and every person. If that were so, it would be very convenient indeed; but it isn't.

It is plain foolishness to believe in ready-made, systematic guides to dream interpretation, as if one could simply buy a reference book and look up a particular symbol. *No dream symbol can be separated from the individual who dreams it.* . . . Each individual varies so much in the way that his unconscious complements or compensates his conscious mind that it is impossible to be sure how far dreams and their symbols can be classified at all. . . .

It is true that there are dreams and single symbols (I should prefer to call them "motifs") that are typical and often occur. Among such motifs are falling, flying, . . . running hard yet getting nowhere. . . . But I must stress again that these are motifs that must be considered in the context of the dream itself, not as self-explanatory ciphers. (Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p. 53) [Emphasis added.]

Every symbol in your dream has a special, individual connotation that belongs to you alone, just as the dream is ultimately yours alone. Even when a symbol has a collective or universal meaning, it still has a personal coloration for you and can be fully explained only from within you.

This is why it is so important that you do this first step thoroughly. Find the associations that are yours, that come from your own unconscious. Don't accept standardized interpretations as a substitute.

This advice is even more important when we get into archetypal amplification. People can get so overinvolved with searching for mythic connections that they forget that they also have personal associations to the symbols. This is the point at which the temptation is so strong to turn to a dictionary of symbolism, find out what the myths say about the symbol, and stop there.

If I don't find my *personal* connection to the archetype, then all this is pointless. The archetype is present in me, acting through me, living its life through mine. When it appears in my dream, it

means that something is going on between my ego and that archetype; something is trying to evolve. I have to pin it down, see how it relates to *my* life, now, today.

It isn't enough to say, "Ah! That is a symbol of the Great Mother." It isn't enough to hang an abstract label on the dream person—Great Mother, anima, shadow—and then walk away from it. We have to push further. We have to ask: "What is this archetype doing today in my personal life? What does this have to do with me, individually?"

Strictly speaking, it should not be necessary for anyone to get involved in researching myths, comparative religion, alchemy, and so forth in order to find the universal level of meaning for a symbol. When the unconscious uses a symbol, it inherently contains within itself the meaning of the symbol. It already knows its own reference to the symbol. Therefore, if you pursue your personal associations to the dream image, the unconscious will, sooner or later, produce the archetypal connections that apply.

Nevertheless, it is a great aid to know what the symbol has meant to others, and how it has appeared in collective myths and folktales. This knowledge can shorten the process. It can also act as confirmation of the personal associations that spring spontaneously out of you.